

MEMORANDUM

THE PRESIDENT

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

INFORMATION 22804

October 22, 1970

SECRET/NOFORN

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger *AK*

SUBJECT: The Status of Communist Base Areas in Cambodia

You asked General Haig about an article in the Washington Sunday Star on October 11, entitled "Reds Building Cambodia Bases," which included some alarming statements about North Vietnamese activities and intentions along the Cambodian-South Vietnamese border. The article's major points and our comments follow.

1) The article claimed that North Vietnam is rapidly reconstructing its bases in Cambodia along the South Vietnamese frontier.

Comment: The Communists are expanding and restructuring their logistics network through Laos and Cambodia, but they are not reconstructing their old network of bases along the South Vietnamese border.

NSS, OSD, DIA reviews
completed

-- A new system of enemy base areas is being developed in Cambodia along the Mekong River, well to the west of the former sanctuaries. (See map at Tab A).

-- A small number of enemy units have moved back into only a few of these old base areas since U.S. forces withdrew from Cambodia at the end of June. However, South Vietnamese forces are continuing to operate along the Cambodian border. Recently they have entered the seven mountains sanctuary area straddling the Northern IV Corps boundary with Cambodia - an area which the GVN did not feel strong enough to tackle during the major sanctuary operations last spring.

-- Hanoi is also expanding and reinforcing its trail network in southern Laos, which is the only major supply corridor now available after the loss of Sihanoukville.

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2) The article claimed that the Communist command structure, dispersed by allied operations in Cambodia, has now returned to full operation.

Comment: The Communist command structure -- or COSVN -- has essentially recovered from the disruptions caused by the allied cross border operations. However, it is now located deeper in Cambodia, and not in its former position astride the border.

3) The article claimed that the buildup of Communist forces and supplies presages one of the largest offensives of the war in South Vietnam within two months.

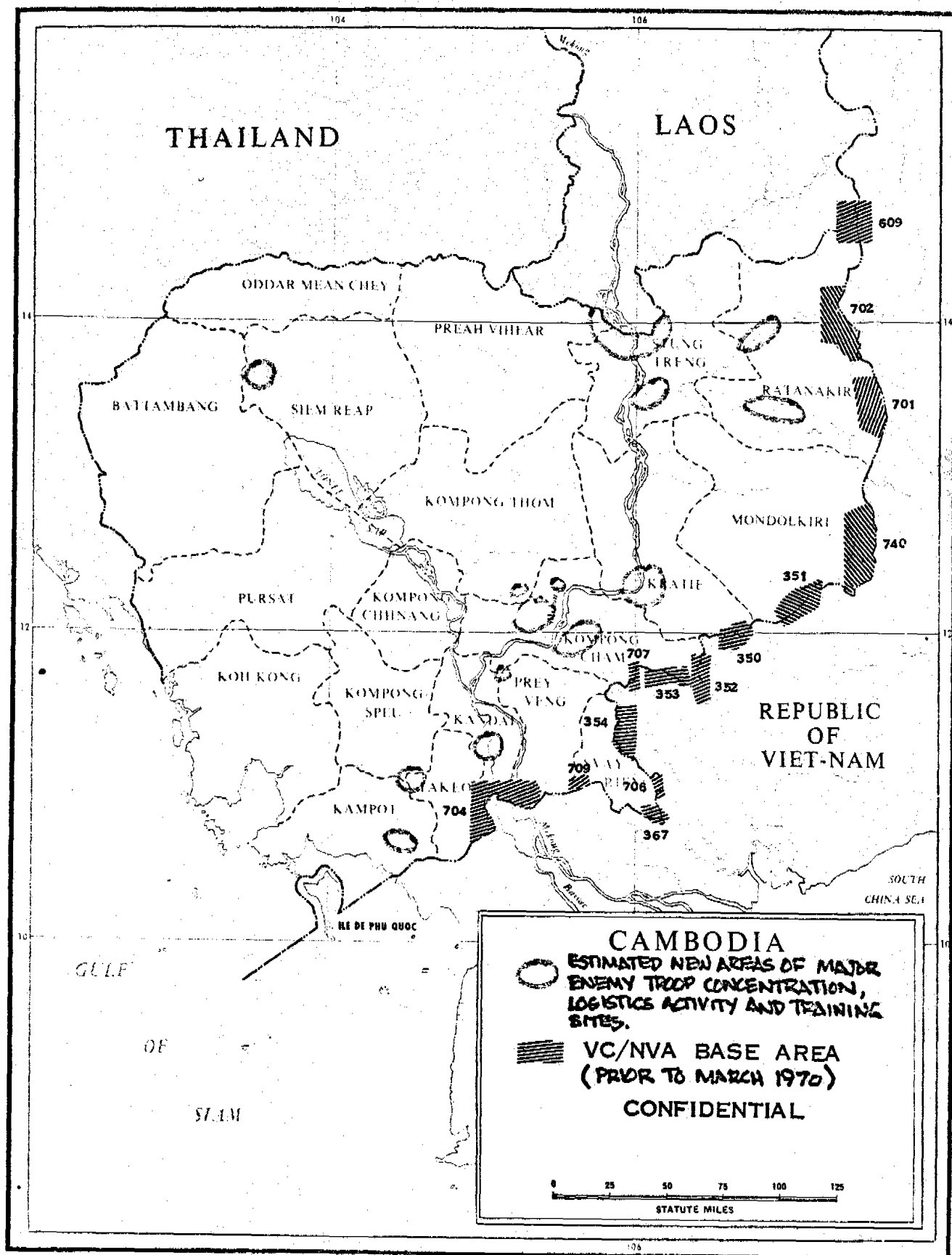
Comment: We disagree. The enemy simply does not have the capability to launch a sustained countrywide offensive within 60 days.

-- The Communists could launch major attacks in Cambodia or in southern Laos. Within South Vietnam, however, the enemy main force threat is confined to the two northernmost provinces and the Central Highlands area. Even here the enemy concentrations are down from the pre-Cambodia levels.

-- North Vietnam has not yet begun to move the supplies necessary for a major offensive. So far, Communist efforts have focused on securing and repairing their road and trail system in Laos and Cambodia. The rainy season is drawing to a close, though, and we expect that the Communists will soon begin to move a large amount of supplies out of North Vietnam into their supply corridor.

-- Aside from current restrictions on Communist capabilities, there is little evidence to suggest that Hanoi intends to abandon its strategy of low level protracted warfare in the near future.

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MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

ACTION

October 15, 1970

SECRET/NOFORN

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: John H. Holdridge

SUBJECT: Memorandum for the President on Communist base areas in Cambodia

The President requested an appraisal of an article appearing in the Washington Star on October 11, entitled "Reds Building Cambodia Bases" (Tab C). CIA and DIA have forwarded a joint comment on the article (Tab B), and we have summarized it in a memorandum for the President (Tab A).

RECOMMENDATION:

That you forward the memorandum at Tab A to the President.

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INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

13 OCT 1970

In reply refer to:
I-25007/70

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL SECURITY
AFFAIRS

SUBJECT: DIA/CIA Assessment of October 11, 1970 Washington Sunday
Star Article Concerning Reconstruction of Bases on the
Cambodia/South Vietnam Border

As requested by Mr. Holdridge of your staff, the attached
assessment by DIA/CIA is forwarded.

Glenn Totten

Attachment
DIA/CIA Intelligence
Appraisal re Cambodia Bases

CLASSIFIED AT 3 YEAR INTERVALS;
DECLASSIFIED AFTER 12 YEARS.
DOD DIR 5200.10

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Cambodia Bases

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c. The statement that the North Vietnamese logistics system and new reinforcements would be sufficient for a major offensive, one of the largest of the war, in less than two months is incorrect. The enemy is not credited with a capability for launching a sustained, countrywide offensive within the next 60 days. The enemy has been supporting his combat operations during the wet season by drawing down on his local ordnance stockpiles. These stockpiles must be replenished to support a sustained major offensive. Replenishment will commence with the onset of the enemy's dry season logistic effort scheduled to begin around mid-October. While he is given the capability of launching major attacks in Cambodia and in localized areas of South Vietnam within 60 days with his present forces, it is doubtful that he would be in a position to launch a general offensive with augmented forces prior to early 1971. Even then he would have to weigh seriously the effect that such an offensive might have on the US withdrawal schedule, the possibility of renewal of Allied bombing of North Vietnam as well as the danger of expanded RVN cross-border operations. There is as yet no evidence to suggest that Hanoi is willing to sustain the heavy casualties that could be expected with a major offensive in the next few months or that it is willing to change its overall strategy of "protracted warfare." Therefore we do not believe that an enemy offensive at this time would be one of the largest of the war. On the other hand, we believe that he will provide the troops necessary to meet his expanded requirements, due primarily to the expansion of the war in Cambodia, but that he will limit offensive actions to conserve those forces until such time as US redeployments reduce our support of RVN forces.

Approved by:

1 Encl
Map (S/NFD)

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Reds Rebuilding Cambodia Bases

PHNOM PENH (AP)—While the United States presses for peace in Indochina, North Vietnam is rushing reconstruction of its huge network of border bases in Cambodia on the frontier with South Vietnam, military and diplomatic sources report.

The Communist command structure, sent fleeing by the allied incursion into eastern Cambodia in May and June, has returned to full operations with completely re-established radio and even telephone communication in some areas, the sources said.

A Communist diplomatic source said the North Vietnamese logistic system and new reinforcements will be sufficient for a major offensive in South Vietnam in less than two months. Some Communist sources have predicted the offensive will be one of the largest of the war.

The reports in Phnom Penh came as Washington was said to believe that the allied invasion of the enemy sanctuaries in Cambodia had encouraged President Nixon to offer a standstill cease-fire in Indochina on Wednesday and to

launch a determined peace campaign.

Diplomatic sources here said the Communists are unlikely to accept while they hold so little of the South Vietnamese countryside.

Initial reaction from the Vietnamese Communists has, in fact, been negative. In addition, the Soviet Union denounced Nixon's proposal yesterday in Pravda, the party newspaper, as mere "shifting and dodging." The editorial was the first Soviet response.

Some sources see the growing enemy force on the South Vietnamese border as a sign of preparations for an offensive that will give Hanoi more bargaining leverage and larger control in South Vietnam.

The reports on the enemy recovery along South Vietnam's border came from Cambodian high command sources, Western military experts and Communist sources. They agree on one point: The enemy recovery has been rapid.

Communist sources having indirect contact with the Communist command agree that the United States' two-month

See INDOCHINA, Page A-6

INDOCHINA

Continued From Page A-1

operation particularly ripped gaping holes in the elaborate base system Hanoi had set up for the Vietnam war. They said this had seriously damaged Hanoi's battle timetable.

Now, informed sources say, a new base camp system is growing despite American bombing of both troops and supplies moving down the Ho Chi Minh trail of Eastern Laos and of the camps when they are spotted.

(Yesterday, for the second day, B52s conducted heavy raids along that portion of the trail.)

A Communist diplomatic source in a position to know said the resupply "is moving reasonably smoothly," even though the North Vietnamese face a vastly different problem with their rear area base camps now.

Before the allied incursion, the North Vietnamese were secure in their border camps and were fighting only one war, in Vietnam.

Now, although U.S. troops are confined to Vietnam and Saigon's soldiers have vastly scaled down their Cambodian operations, American bombers, including B52s, insure that no base camp is really secure.

Additionally, the war against the Cambodian government has siphoned off the efforts of the better part of five North Vietnamese divisions.

10 Divisions Expected

However, Communist sources claim that, by the time the new offensive begins, some 10 divisions will be in Cambodia and southern Laos with the major part concentrated for heavy thrusts into South Vietnam.

Cambodian forces have lost 500 killed so far in their five-week-old drive to gain control of the heartland north of Phnom Penh, a government spokesman said yesterday.

He gave no estimate of North Vietnamese and Viet Cong losses.

Fighting broke out again in the Taing Kauk sector, 47 miles north of Phnom Penh. There, the government's big push northward has been stalled for nearly a month.

Cambodian and enemy forces battled for 5½ hours and the government spokesman also reported attacks east and west of the village.

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Comment: The Communists are expanding and restructuring their logistics network through Laos and Cambodia, but they are not reconstructing their old network of bases along the South Vietnamese border.

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-- A small number of enemy units have moved back into only a few of these old base areas since U.S. forces withdrew from Cambodia at the end of June. However, South Vietnamese forces are continuing to operate along the Cambodian border. Recently they have entered the seven mountains sanctuary area straddling the Northern IV Corps boundary with Cambodia - an area which the GVN did not feel strong enough to tackle during the major sanctuary operations last spring.

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Copy 1 rewritten by Gen. Haig 12/10/70

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Rewritten:AMH:wgh:10-16-70 (1st page only)